

REMARKS

Applicant concurrently files herewith an Excess Claim Fee Payment Letter for five (5) excess total claims.

Claims 1-25 are all of the claims presently pending in the application. Claims 1-2, 4-5, and 8-11 have been amended to more particularly define the invention. Claims 14-25 have been added to provide more varied protection of the claimed invention and to claim additional features of the invention.

It is noted that the claim amendments are made only for more particularly pointing out the invention, and not for distinguishing the invention over the prior art, narrowing the claims or for any statutory requirements of patentability. Further, Applicant specifically states that no amendment to any claim herein should be construed as a disclaimer of any interest in or right to an equivalent of any element or feature of the amended claim.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that claims 4, 5, 7-9, and 12-13 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. However, Applicant respectfully submits that all of the claims are allowable.

Claims 10-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Kenichi (cited by applicant). Claim 6 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kenichi in view of Murchie (UK 2235032).

These rejections are respectfully traversed in the following discussion.

I. THE CLAIMED INVENTION

The claimed invention (e.g., as defined in claim 1) is directed to a bumper structure. The bumper structure includes a bumper face, a cross member mounted on a vehicle body, an under cover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body and extended forward to form a bracket for fastening a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member, and a lower impact absorbing member. The lower impact absorbing member is formed integrally with the under cover and is disposed between the lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member for absorbing an impact between the cross member and the bumper face.

Conventional bumper structures have been formed so that an impact can be absorbed at a lower portion of the bumper as well as at an upper portion of the bumper to improve the protection of pedestrians. Certain conventional bumper structures interpose a bracket between a bumper face and a cross member so that it fastens a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member on a vehicle body. The bracket includes a plurality of mounting surfaces and a plurality of vertical surfaces that extend forward from both sides of the respective mounting surfaces in a direction substantially normal to a transverse direction of the vehicle. The vertical surfaces function as impact absorbing members at the lower portion of the bumper face (see Application at page 1, line 14 through page 2, line 4). Interposing the bracket between the bumper face and the cross member, as described above, causes an increase in the number of components and results in a complicated structure.

The claimed invention of exemplary claim 1, on the other hand, provides a bumper structure including a bumper face, a cross member mounted on a vehicle body, an under cover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body and extended forward to form a bracket for fastening a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member, and a lower impact absorbing member. The lower impact absorbing member is formed integrally with the under cover and is disposed between the lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member for absorbing an impact between the cross member and the bumper face (e.g., see Application at page 3, lines 14-24). This feature allows the bumper structure to provide an appropriate impact absorbing function at a lower portion of the bumper face having a simple structure and without increasing the number of components (e.g. see Application at page 3, lines 6-13).

II. THE 35 USC §112, SECOND PARAGRAPH REJECTION

Claims 10-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The claims have been amended, above, to overcome this rejection. Specifically, claims 10-11 have been amended to recite “*wherein the locking pawl comprises a notch in a rear portion of the bead*”.

In view of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

III. THE PRIOR ART REFERENCES

A. The Kenichi Reference

The Examiner alleges that Kenichi teaches the claimed invention of claims 1-3. Applicant submits, however, that there are elements of the claimed invention which are neither taught nor suggested by Kenichi.

That is, Kenichi does not teach or suggest a bumper structure having “*an under cover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body, and extended forward to form a bracket for fastening a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member; and a lower impact absorbing member formed integrally with the under cover, and disposed between the lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member for absorbing an impact between the cross member and the bumper face*” as recited in claim 1.

As noted above, unlike conventional bumper structures, the claimed invention of exemplary claim 1 provides a bumper structure including a bumper face, a cross member mounted on a vehicle body, an under cover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body and extended forward to form a bracket for fastening a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member, and a lower impact absorbing member. The lower impact absorbing member is formed integrally with the under cover and is disposed between the lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member for absorbing an impact between the cross member and the bumper face (e.g., see Application at page 3, lines 14-24). This feature allows the bumper structure to provide an appropriate impact absorbing function at a lower portion of the bumper face having a simple structure and without increasing the number of components (e.g. see Application at page 3, lines 6-13).

The novel features of the claimed invention are not taught or suggested by Kenichi. Indeed, the Examiner attempts to rely on the Abstract of Kenichi to support his allegations. The Examiner, however, is clearly incorrect.

Applicant submits that the conventional structure and its problems (i.e., JP 2000006739, Kenichi) are discussed in the background section of the Application (see Application at page 1, line 14 through page 2, line 17). Specifically, the Application states that interposing the bracket between the bumper face and the cross member, as described in Kenichi, causes an increase in the number of components and results in a complicated

structure.

Furthermore, Kenichi merely discloses a bracket interposed between a bumper face and a cross member. The bracket is secured to a lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member by fastening devices.

Nowhere, however, in this passage (nor anywhere else for that matter) does Kenichi teach or suggest a bumper structure including an under cover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body and extended forward to form a bracket for fastening a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member, and a lower impact absorbing member formed integrally with the under cover and is disposed between the lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member for absorbing an impact between the cross member and the bumper face. Indeed, as shown in Figures 1-8, Kenichi merely discloses a bracket for connecting a lower portion of a bumper face to a vehicle cross member. Kenichi does not teach or suggest an impact absorbing member integrally formed with an undercover.

The claimed invention provides an undercover that extends along the bottom of the vehicle and a mounting bracket that extends from the undercover to secure the lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member (see Application at Figure 1). On the other hand, Kenichi merely discloses a bracket that secures a lower end of a bumper face to a cross member. The bracket is secured to the bumper face and the cross member by fasteners (see Kenichi at Abstract and Figures 1 and 2). Kenichi does not, however, teach or suggest that the bracket extends from an undercover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body. In fact, Kenichi does not even mention, let alone teach or suggest, an undercover.

Furthermore, Kenichi does not teach a lower impact absorbing member formed integrally with the undercover. Kenichi merely teaches that the bracket, which is not formed integrally to an undercover, absorbs shocks in a lower portion of the bumper.

Therefore, Applicant submits that there are elements of the claimed invention that are not taught or suggest by Kenichi. Therefore, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this rejection.

B. The Murchie Reference

The Examiner alleges that Murchie would have been combined with Kenichi to teach the claimed invention of claim 6. Applicant submits, however, that even if combined, this combination of references would not teach or suggest each and every feature of the claimed invention.

That is, neither Murchie nor Kenichi, nor any combination thereof teaches or suggests a bumper structure having *“an under cover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body, and extended forward to form a bracket for fastening a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member; and a lower impact absorbing member formed integrally with the under cover, and disposed between the lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member for absorbing an impact between the cross member and the bumper face”* as recited in claim 1.

The novel features of the claimed invention are not taught or suggested by Murchie nor does Murchie make up for the deficiencies of Kenichi discussed above. The Examiner attempts to rely on the Abstract of Murchie to support his allegations. The Examiner, however, is clearly incorrect.

Murchie merely discloses an energy absorbing structure having a conical fiber reinforced plastics structure. The broad end of the conical structure is positioned to receive an impact load while a narrow end, opposite to the broad end, is secured to a fixed structure. The conical structure functions so that the broad end of the structure collapses first.

However, Murchie fails to teach or suggest a bumper structure including an under cover disposed at a lower portion of the vehicle body and extended forward to form a bracket for fastening a lower portion of the bumper face to the cross member, and a lower impact absorbing member formed integrally with the under cover and is disposed between the lower portion of the bumper face and the cross member for absorbing an impact between the cross member and the bumper face. Indeed, the Examiner does not even allege that Murchie teaches or suggests these features. The Examiner merely relies on Murchie as teaching that an absorbing member may splay out to a greater lateral extent than a mounting structure in a sectorial shape. Therefore, Murchie does not make up for the deficiencies of Kenichi.

Therefore, Applicant submits that even if combined, this combination of references would not teach or suggest each and every feature of the claimed invention. Therefore, the

Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this rejection.

IV. NEW CLAIMS

New claims 14-25 have been added to provide more varied protection for the claimed invention and to claim additional features of the invention. These claims are independently patentable because of the novel features recited therein.

Applicant respectfully submits that new claims 14-25 are patentable over any combination of the applied references at least for analogous reasons to those set forth above with respect to claims 1-13.

V. FORMAL MATTERS AND CONCLUSION

In response to Examiner's objections, the claims have been amended in a manner believed fully responsive to all points raised by the Examiner.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that claims 1-25, all of the claims presently pending in the application, are patentably distinct over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue at the earliest possible time.

Should the Examiner find the application to be other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below to discuss any other changes deemed necessary in a telephonic or personal interview.

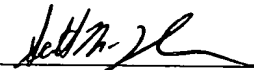
Serial No. 10/091,470
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13

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or to credit any overpayment in fees to Attorney's Deposit Account No. 50-0481.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Scott M. Tulino, Esq.
Registration No. 48,317

Sean M. McGinn, Esq.
Registration No. 34,386

McGinn & Gibb, PLLC
Intellectual Property Law
8321 Old Courthouse Road, Suite 200
Vienna, VA 22182-3817
(703) 761-4100
Customer No. 21254